

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7716
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BEIRUT 2277

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, LE
SUBJ: AFTERMATH OF GOVERNMENT RESIGNATION PART TWO

1. BEGIN SUMMARY. SPECULATION CONTINUES ON THE COMPOSITION OF THE NEW GOVERNMENT, WITH HOSS APPEARING TO BE FRONT RUNNER FOR PRIME MINISTER AT MOMENT. DESPITE DENIALS, SHAFIQ WAZZAN BELIEVES HOSS RESIGNED IN PART BECAUSE OF DISAGREEMENTS WITH BOUTROS. CAMILLE CHAMOUN CALLED FOR A CABINET OF THE "LARGEST POLITICAL PERSONALITIES," BUT WAZZAN THOUGHT THIS WOULD LEAD ONLY TO POLITICAL STRIFE. PIERRE GEMAYEL AND WAZZAN RAISED APECTER OF PARTITION. END SUMMARY.

2. SPECULATION ON NEW CABINET.

A. THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE DAILY IKE CITED A MINISTERIAL SOURCE AS SAYING IT WAS "ALMOST CERTAIN" THAT SALIM AL-HOSS WOULD BE
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APPOINTED PRIME MINISTER. DEPUTY ALBERT MOUKHAIBER TOLD AMBASSADOR THAT SA'EB SALAAM ENJOYED WIDE SUPPORT IN PARLIAMENT, BUT THAT TAKIEDDINE SOLH WAS UNACCEPTABLE TO SYRIANS. NEWS-PAPERS CONTINUE TO CITE TAKIEDDINE SOLH, ABDULLAH YAFI AND OTHERS AS POSSIBILITIES, HOWEVER. ISLAMIC COUNCIL PRESIDENT SAFIQ WAZZAN TOLD EMBOFF APRIL 21 THAT HOSS MIGHT BE REAPPOINTED BECAUSE THE PARTIES COULD AGREE ON NOBODY ELSE.

B. L'ORIENT LE-JOUR COMMENTED ON APRIL 21 THAT "THE GENERAL TENDENCY" IS FOR THE FORMATION OF A PARLIAMENTARY CABINET WHICH WOULD ALSO INCLUDE SOME YOUNG NON-PARLIAMENTARY MEMBERS. THE PAPER PREDICTED AN ENLARGED CABINET OF 24 PEOPLE WITH EIGHT MINISTERS OF STATE AND 16 MINISTERS WITH PORTFOLIOS, AND INCLUDING CAMILLE CHAMOUN, SA'EB SALAAM, PIERRE GEMAYEL, MAJID ARSLAN, ADEL OSSEIRAN, BAHIGE TAKIEDDINE OR WALID JUNBLATT, FOUAD BOUTROS, MICHEL MURR, AMINE GEMAYEL, DORY CHAMOUN, TONY FRANJIYAH, RENE MOUAWAD, SAMIR SABBAGH, ASIM QANSUH, SHAFIQ WAZZAN OR BASSEM EL-JISR, KARIN PAKRADOUNI, KHATCHIG BABIKIAN, EDOUARD HONEIN.

C. EMBOFF SPOKE WITH KARIM PAKRIDOUNI APRIL 21. PAKRADOUNI SAID HE HAD BEEN MEETING DAILY WITH PRESIDENT SARKIS, AND HAD LUNCH WITH SARKIS, HOSS AND BOUTROS APRIL 20. HOSS WOULD ALMOST CERTAINLY BE PRIME MINISTER AGAIN; BOUTROS WOULD CONTINUE AS FOREIGN MINISTER, BUT NOT DEFENSE MINISTER. EITHER GABY LAHOUD OR PAKRADOUNI HIMSELF WOULD BE DEFENSE MINISTER. AMINE GEMAYEL WOULD BE MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS. OTHER LIKELY MINISTERS INCLUDED DANY CHAMOUN, TONY FRANJIYAH, WALID JUNBLATT, SHAFIQ WAZZAN, TALLAL MERHABI, ASSEM QANSUH.

3. THE RESIGNATION.

A. PRIME MINISTER AL-HOSS DENIED ON APRIL 20 PRESS ACCOUNTS
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CLAIMING THAT THE CABINET HAS RESIGNED BECAUSE OF DIFFERENCES BETWEEN HIM AND FOREIGN MINISTER BOUTROS. HOSS SAID THE RESIGNATION WAS THE RESULT OF "AN UNDERSTANDING AND JOINT CONVICTION BETWEEN THE CABINET AND PRESIDENT SARKIS."

B. SHAFIQ WAZZAN TOLD EMBOFF THAT PRIME MINISTER SALIM AL-HOSS HAD BEEN PLANNING TO RESIGN FOR SEVERAL WEEKS BECAUSE HE BELIEVED THAT THE POLITICAL PARTIES IN LEBANON WERE PREVENTING THE GOVERNMENT FROM WORKING EFFECTIVELY. DESPITE DENIALS, WAZZAN SAID HOSS' RESIGNATION ON APRIL 19 HAD BEEN PRECIPITATED BY A NUMBER OF DISAGREEMENTS WITH FOREIGN MINISTER FOUAD BOUTROS, THE MOST RECENT OF WHICH CONCERNED AYN AR-RUMMANEH. BOUTROS HAD ADVOCATED USING GOVERNMENT FUNDS TO HELP REPAIR DAMAGES CAUSED BY THE FIGHTING IN AYN AR-RUMMANEH, BUT HOSS HAD OPPOSED THIS EXPENDITURE OF FUNDS.

C. KARIM PAKRADOUNI TOLD EMBOFF THAT HOSS WAS CONSIDERING RESIGNING AS EARLY AS APRIL 13, BUT HAD DEFERRED TO PRESIDENT'S WISHES. ON APRIL 18, PAKRADOUNI WAS AT MEETING WITH SARKIS AND BOUTROS. BOUTROS WAS INITIALLY OPPOSED TO A RESIGNATION AT THAT TIME IN LIGHT OF DIFFICULTIES WHICH WOULD FOLLOW, BUT PAKRADOUNI HAD ARGUED - HE THOUGHT WITH SOME EFFECT - THAT RISK

OF A DISCORDANT POLITICAL CABINET TO FOLLOW (BOUTROS' PRINCIPAL OBJECTION) WOULD BE MORE THAN OFFSET BY EFFECT A POLITICAL CABINET WOULD HAVE IN UNDERMINING GROWING UNITY IN OPPOSITION TO HOSS GOVERNMENT OF THE VARIOUS POLITICAL GROUPINGS.

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D. INTERIOR MINISTER SALAH SALMAN IN AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH IKE ON APRIL 20 SAID "HE WAS RELUCTANT TO ACCEPT THE RESIGNATION DECISION," BECAUSE HE WAS AFRAID IT WOULD LEAD TO THE "CATASTROPHE WE WERE TRYING TO AVOID. . . I HOPE WE WILL NEVER REGRET THIS DECISION, BUT I HAVE MY DOUBTS." THE INTERIOR MINISTER SAID HE WAS "EXTREMELY WORRIED ABOUT THE FUTURE OF LEBANON AND CALLED ON LEBANESE LEADERS TO PUT ASIDE THEIR DIFFERENCES, "OTHERWISE, THERE IS GOING TO BE A CATASTROPHE."

E. WALID JUNBLATT STRONGLY CRITICIZED THE GOVERNMENT'S DECISION TO RESIGN ON APRIL 20. HE SAID THAT IT HAD PLUNGED THE COUNTRY INTO A MINISTERIAL CRISIS, "WHILE THE COUNTRY IS AT A CROSSROADS, AND THERE ARE DIFFICULT AND DECISIVE CHOICES TO BE MADE."

4. THE CHAMOUN PROBLEM.

A. AFTERA MEETING WITH PRESIDENT SARKIS ON APRIL 20, NLP LEADER

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CAMILLE CHAMOUN TOLD REPORTERS "THE FUTURE CABINET MUST INCLUDE THE LARGEST POLITICAL PERSONALITIES IN THE COUNTRY." CHAMOUN ADDED THAT "THERE MUST NOT BE A WEAK GOVERNMENT WHICH THE PRESIDENT MUST ALWAYS COVER UP FOR."

B. PRINCIPAL DILEMMA FACING SARKIS, PAKRADOUNI TOLD EMBOFF, WAS HOW TO PACIFY CAMILLE CHAMOUN. CHAMOUN SENIOR DEFINITELY WANTED TO BE A MINISTER HIMSELF. (HE HAD PROPOSED TO THE PRESIDENT A SMALL CABINET OF SIX SENIOR POLITICAL FIGURES, INCLUDING HIMSELF (AS THE MARONITE), BOUTROS (ORTHODOX), SA'EB SALAAM (SUNNI), MAJID ARSLAN (DRUZE), ADEL OSSEIRAN (SHI'A), AND AN UNSPECIFIED GREEK CATHOLIC. SARKIS WAS INCLINED TO REJECT CHAMOUN'S CONCEPT, SINCE IT WOULD BE DOMINATED BY CHAMOUN HIMSELF.) THE PROBLEM WAS THAT IN A LARGER CABINET, A CHAMOUN AS MINISTER OF DEFENSE WOULD BE UNACCEPTABLE TO THE MOSLEMS. PAKRADOUNI HIMSELF SEEMED INCLINED TO THE IDEA THAT THE WAY TO DEAL WITH CAMILLE CHAMOUN WAS TO EXCLUDE HIM FROM THE CABINET (WHILE OFFERING A SECONDARY CABINET JOB TO DANY CHAMOUN), AND TO SEEK TO NEUTRALIZE HIS INFLUENCE THEREAFTER THROUGH OTHER MEANS (CENSORSHIP, PATRONAGE, ETC.).

5. CONCEPT OF CABINET.

WAZZAN TOLD EMBOFF THAT NEW CABINET SHOULD REPRESENT AN INTER-MEDIATE STEP BETWEEN A TECHNOCRATIC CABINET AND A FULL-BLOWN POLITICAL CABINET. HE THOUGHT THE NEW CABINET SHOULD INCLUDE PEOPLE SUCH AS MICHEL MURR WHO WERE CLOSELY ALLIED WITH THE PHALANGE, BUT WERE NOT IMPORTANT PHALANGE POLITICIANS. WAZZAN THOUGHT THAT THE INCLUSION OF THE MOST IMPORTANT POLITICAL LEADERS SUCH AS CAMILLE CHAMOUN, PIERRE GEMAYEL AND SA'EB SALMAN WOULD MERELY LEAD TO BITTER POLITICAL CONFLICTS WITHIN THE CABINET, ALTHOUGH THE INCLUSION OF YOUNGER FIGURES SUCH AS DANY CHAMOUN AND AMINE GEMAYEL "MIGHT WORK."

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6. TIMING.

A. WAZZAN BELIEVED THAT SARKIS WOULD DESIGNATE THE PRIME MINISTER BEFORE LEAVING ON A PLANNED TRIP TO DAMASCUS NEXT WEEK. SARKIS WOULD NOT WANT TO APPEAR TO CHOOSE HIS CANDIDATE AFTER CONSULTING WITH THE SYRIANS. THE CHOICE OF THE OTHER MINISTERS MIGHT TAKE SOME TIME, HOWEVER. ASKED IF THE RESIGNATION OF THE GOVERNMENT AND THE FORMATION OF A NEW CABINET WOULD BE HELPFUL,

WAZZAN REPLIED THAT HE WANTED TO BE OPTIMISTIC BUT IT WAS DIFFICULT TO BE SO.

B. PAKRADOUNI SAID PRESIDENT WAS IN NO HURRY TO ANNOUNCE NEW CABINET (TO AVOID APPEARANCES OF PANIC), PROBABLY WOULD NOT ACT UNTIL END OF NEXT WEEK (ABOUT APRIL 28).

7. SPECTER OF PARTITION.

A. PIERRE GEMAYEL SAID ON APRIL 20 THAT EVEN IF THE RESIGNATION OF THE GOVERNMENT HAD IN EFFECT PUSHED ASIDE CERTAIN DANGERS, "THERE IS NO PALLIATIVE" TO THE PROSPECT OF A POWERLESS LEGAL GOVERNMENT. GEMAYEL ADDED, "IN THAT CASE PARTITION WOULD BECOME LEGAL AND WOULD BE GIVEN DE FACTO CONSECRATION." ON APRIL 19 GEMAYEL HAD WARNED THAT NO CABINET COULD GOVERN "IF EFFECTIVE AUTHORITY, SECURITY AND DISCIPLINE WERE NOT ASSURED." HE HAD SAID THAT AGREEMENT AMONG LEBANESE MUST PRECEED FORMATION OF A NEW CABINET AND THAT IF DISAGREEMENT AMONG LEBANESE CONTINUED, "LEBANON WILL BE MENACED WITH PARTITION."

B. WAZZAN COMMENTED THAT MUSLIMS WERE BECOMING FED UP WITH MARONITES RAISING SPECTER OF PARTITION (SEPTTEL). IF MARONITES WANTED PARTITION, THEY JUST MIGHT GET IT. PARKER

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